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was shortened to *oi* just as for instance *âi* became *ei* (Cf. Lasch, *Mnd. Gramm.* §§ 124, 195). This *oi* then suffered the same change as original *oi* in a number of words (Cf. Lasch, § 128: *moyen-meyen, vroide- vreide, hoike- heike, = doit- deit*). Of course there can scarcely be any doubt that forms like *geist, geit, steist, steit* (originally *gê-is, gê-it* etc.) and possibly also *seit* (*segit*, Lasch, § 119), *sleit* (*slegit*) exerted an influence insofar that they tended to establish *deist, deit* as correct forms.

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THE *HOUS OF FAME* AND THE *CORBACCIO*

Within the last few years scholars have attempted to show that Chaucer knew not only Boccaccio's verse but also several of his Italian prose works. The *Filocolo*, *Amorosa Visione*, and *Ameto* have all been proposed as "sources" for the English poet; in addition, the *Vedova* of the *Corbaccio* has been suggested by Rajna as the original of the *Wife of Bath*.¹ The resemblances between these characters are less striking, however, in view of the subsequent discovery by Professor Lowes that Chaucer's account of the *Wife of Bath* is largely borrowed from Deschamps' *Miroir de Mariage*.²

Up to this time, nevertheless, no one has called attention to certain parallels between the *Corbaccio* and the *Hous of Fame*. These points of likeness are found in the structural features of the two works rather than in treatment or phraseology. For the convenience of the reader the *Corbaccio*, which runs to a hundred pages, is summarized below: ³

The poet falls asleep thinking of his mistress. He dreams that he enters a pleasant path, so pleasant that his feet seem to take wings as he hastens forward. His progress is arrested by a cloud, which soon disappears, leaving him in a thorny desert. Here he is so terrified by lamentations and groans that he fears to be torn by wild beasts. Unable to find any way in or out of this solitude, he is giving himself up for lost, when he sees a man approaching.

¹ *Romania*, 1903: pp. 247-8.

² *M. Phil.* VIII, 165-186, 305-334.

³ Boccaccio, *Opere Volgari*, Firenze, Moutier, 1828, v, 155-255.

So dignified is the man's bearing that the dreamer thinks him the proprietor of the place, and dreads being treated as a trespasser. The man reassures the poet who now considers him heaven-sent. In a long dialogue the dreamer is horrified to discover that not only is this man a shade, but the departed husband of his mistress. The shade takes pity on the dreamer's youth and zeal for learning, and disillusionizes him as to the character of this woman. He follows with a long invective against the sex; and he closes the tirade by urging the dreamer to give up the pursuit of love and confine himself to his studies. The dreamer resolves to follow this good advice, whereupon the shade disappears and the dreamer awakes.

This brief summary discloses the following points of likeness between the *Hous of Fame* and the *Corbaccio*:

1. Both works are visions related by the dreamers.

2. The dreamers are students, finding their pleasure in poring over books and having but sorry success in the pursuit of love. (*H. of F.* vv. 620-640, vv. 652-660).

"Gli studi adunque alla sacra filosofia pertinenti infino dalla tua puerizia più assai che il tuo padre non avrebbe voluto ti piacquero, e massimamente in quella parte che a poesia appartiene, nella quale per avventura tu hai con più fervore d'animo che con altezza d'ingegno seguita." (p. 185, lines 3-8)

3. As a reward for Chaucer's devotion to his books, Jupiter sends an eagle to conduct him. Likewise, Boccaccio looks on the Shade as heaven-sent, and the Shade implies that he exposes the treachery of the woman because of the dreamer's studies. To both dreamers their guides make promise of love-tidings. (*H. of F.* vv. 641-651)

"Dovevanti, oltre a questo, li tuoi studii mostrare, e mostrarono, se tu l'avessi voluto vedere, che cose femmine sono, delle quali grandissima parte si chiamano e fanno chiamare donne; e pochissime se ne truovano." (p. 186, lines 7-12)

4. Chaucer is borne rapidly through the air by the eagle; Boccaccio's feet move as swiftly as though they were winged. (*H. of F.* vv. 534-552)

"Onde pareva che in me s'accendesse un disio sì fervente di pervenire a quello, che non solamente i miei piedi si moveano a correre per pervenirvi, ma mi pareva che mi fossero da non usitata natura prestate velocissime ali, con le quali mentre a me pareva

più rattamente volare, mi parve il cammino cambiar qualità:” (p. 162, lines 5-12)

5. Both dreamers find themselves suddenly on arid plains where they would be helpless, except for the timely assistance of their guides. (*H. of F.* vv. 480-495)

“conobbi me dal mio volato essere stato lasciato in una solitudine diserta aspra e fiera, piena di salvatiche piante, di pruni e di bronchi senza sentieri o via alcuna, e intorniata da montagne asprissime e sì alte, che con la loro sommità pareva toccassono il cielo: . . . laond’ io arrestato nella guisa che mostrato è, e da ogni consiglio e aiuto abbandonato, quasi niun’ altra cosa che la morte o da fame o da crudel bestia aspettando, fra gli aspri sterpi e le rigide piante piangendo mi pareva dimorare, niun’ altra cosa faccendo che tacitamente o dolermi dell’ entrata, senza prevedere dov’ io pervenir mi dovessi, o chiamare il soccorso di Dio.” (p. 162, line 24 and p. 163, line 14)

6. Chaucer’s statement that the House of Tidings is more wonderfully built than the *domus Dedali* or *Laborintus* reminds one of Boccaccio’s phrase, *Laberinto d’Amore*. At first, resemblance between a valley and a house may seem slight, but it must be remembered that Chaucer’s house is sixty miles long; moreover, Boccaccio also refers to his valley as a portico. (*H. of F.* vv. 1918-1923)

“alcuni il chiamano il Laberinto d’Amore, altri la Valle incantata, e assai il Porcile di Venere, e molti la Valle de’ sospiri e della miseria.” (p. 167 bottom)

7. The fact that the *Corbaccio* furnishes no clue for Chaucer’s revolving house need not be disconcerting, inasmuch as this incongruous feature of the House of Tidings has been shown by Dr. Sypherd⁴ to be of Celtic origin. It is impossible for the dreamer to enter or leave either the valley or the house unaided. (*H. of F.* vv. 2002-6)

“nè per guardare con gli occhi corporali, nè per estimazione della mente in guisa alcuna mi pareva dover comprendere nè conoscere da qual parte io mi fossi in quella entrato; nè ancora, che più mi spaventava, poteva discernere dond’ io di quindi potessi uscire, e in più dimestichi luoghi tornarmi:” (p. 162, line 29)

8. Both house and valley are remarkable for the sighings and

⁴ *Chaucer Society*, Second Series 39, pp. 138-155.

groanings of unhappy lovers, which in the valley are so noisy that Boccaccio takes them for wild beasts. (*H. of F.* vv. 1927-1935, vv. 1955-76)

"e oltre a questo, mi pareva per tutto, dove che io mi volgessi, sentire mugghii, urli e strida di diversi e ferocissimi animali de' quali la qualità del luogo mi dava assai certa speranza e testimonianza che per tutto ne dovesse essere." (p. 163, line 3)

9. The Shade in the *Corbaccio* is made a figure of great importance, and more than a page of description assures us that he is a 'man of greet auctoritee.' (*H. of F.* vv. 2155 to end)

"venire verso me con lento passo un uomo senza alcuna compagnia, il quale, per quello, ch' io poi più dappresso discernessi, era di statura grande, e di pelle e di pelo bruno, benchè in parte bianco divenuto fosse per gli anni, de' quali forse sessanta o più dimostrava d'avere, asciutto e nerboruto, e di non molto piacevole aspetto: e il suo vestimento era lunghissimo e largo, e di colore vermiglio, e comechè assai più vivo mi paresse, non ostante che tenebroso fosse il luogo là dov' io era, che quello che qua tingono i nostri maestri: il quale, come detto è, con lenti passi approssimandosi a me, in parte mi porse paura, e in parte mi recò speranza: paura mi porse, perciocchè io cominciai a temere non quello luogo a lui fosse per propria possessione assegnato, e recandosi ad ingiuria di vedervi alcuno altro, le fiere del luogo, siccome a lui familiari, a vendicar la sua ingiuria sopra me incitasse, e da queste mi facesse dilacerare; speranza d'alcuna salute mi recò, in quanto più faccendosi a me vicino, pieno di mansuetudine mel pareva vedere, e più e più riguardandolo, estimando d'altra volta, non quivi, ma in altra parte averlo verduto, diceva meco: questi per avventura, siccome uomo uso in queste contrade, mi mostrerà dove sia di questo luogo l' uscita; e ancora, se in lui fia spirito di pietà alcuno, infino a quello benignamente mi menerà." (p. 163, line 25)

The parallelism, it will be observed, in every case lies in the fundamental idea rather than in the phraseology; moreover, the plan is in many respects different. In the *Corbaccio* the Shade alone acts as guide, a function which Chaucer divides among the eagle, the man that stood 'right at his bak' in the House of Tidings, and perhaps also the 'man of greet auctoritee' who is introduced just as the poem breaks off. No parallels appear until the desert scene at the end of the first Book of the *Hous of Fame*, but almost immediately afterward comes the promise of the love-tidings—a promise that is frequently repeated in the rest of the

poem. The exact nature of these tidings has not been made altogether clear, in spite of the theories proposed within the last few years.⁵ In this connection it is noteworthy that the eagle leads the dreamer to expect not only "loves newe begonne" but also

Mo discords, and mo Ielousyes,
Mo murmurs, and mo novelryes,
And mo dissimulaciouns,
And feyned reparaciouns.

Such references to the drawbacks of love would seem unsuitable if, as Imelmann suggested,⁶ the news of the royal marriage were to be forthcoming. With such an aim, these allusions would be both inharmonious with respect to the tone of the poem, and impolitic for a court poet. Indeed, such a cynical enumeration seems a sure indication of satire. While it is unlikely that Chaucer's English mind would have elected to follow the Italian poet's long tirades against woman, he may easily have intended some sly fun at the expense of the sex. With such tidings of woman's unworthiness the poet dreamer could return to his studies with complacency, feeling that he had not missed much after all. By such an ending, Chaucer would fulfill the promises of the eagle and conform to the general tone of the poem without unduly lengthening his "litel laste book."

In considering Chaucer's use of the *Corbaccio* one must not forget that, at most, it was but one of the many strands that the poet was uniting in his fabric. The influence of the Italian treatise would have been most apparent just after the point where the *Hous of Fame* breaks off. Certainly, if he had the *Corbaccio* in mind, Chaucer would have made the "man of greet auctoritee" serve as the revealer of the love-tidings—a function that would seem in every way suitable for this elusive personage.

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⁵ Manly, *Kittredge An. Papers*, p. 73. Koch, *Eng. Stud.* xli, 118.

⁶ *Englische Studien*, xlv, 397-431.